



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
OFFICE OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

INSURANCE BUILDING, PO BOX 43113 • OLYMPIA, WASHINGTON 98504-3113

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE — June 30, 2000

## Washington's population growth continues to slow

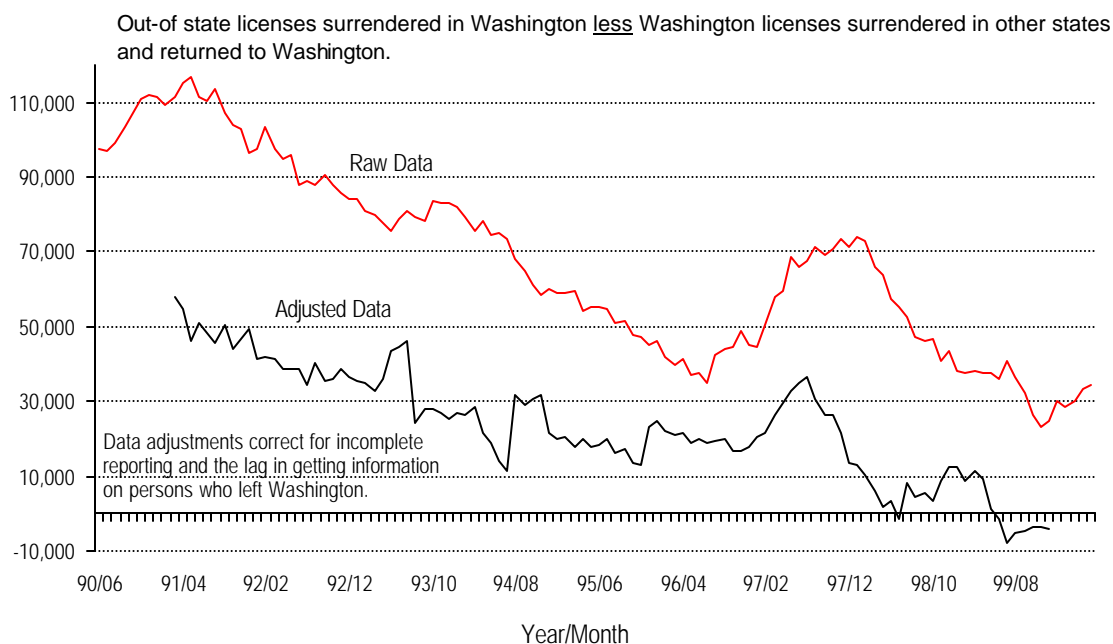
OLYMPIA — Washington state's population grew by 46,000 people over the past year, reflecting a continuing slowdown in the number of people moving into the state from other places, according to estimates released today by the state Office of Financial Management (OFM).

As of April 1, 2000, there were approximately 5,803,400 people living in Washington State according to OFM's annual estimate — an increase of 0.8 percent over the last year compared to a 1.3 percent gain for 1998-99 and annual gains of nearly 3 percent in the early 1990s.

Theresa Lowe, chief demographer for OFM, said most migration to Washington reflects the strength of Washington's economy relative to other states. Population movement is usually the result of several "push" and "pull" factors with the most important factors representing employment and financial opportunities. At present, the strength of California's economy and the national economy as a whole have reduced Washington's attractiveness. The competition is tough — Washington has lost some of its drawing and holding power. The decline in aerospace employment, which typically pulls in persons from outside the area, is one of many factors contributing to the present circumstances.

Over the decades, Washington's population growth has always had its ups and downs. But the present slowdown is unique in that it is somewhat unnoticed by Puget Sound residents because the state's economy is solid, unemployment is at an all-time low, and the booming housing market is just now beginning to dampen.

### Net Driver's Licenses, 12 Month Total, State of Washington



However, the most reliable indicators of population movement tell us growth is slowing. The net drivers movement data clearly show diminishing gains from other states starting in 1998 — and when adjusted for coverage and lagged reporting — the figures show a net loss of drivers beginning in June of 1999.

Annual net migration gains to Washington have declined from 54,600 in 1997 to 10,000 by the year 2000. The most recent drivers data may indicate the beginnings of a turnaround — this will largely depend on how hardy the California and national economies remain. Growth in the state's population due to births less deaths, called "natural increase," remains relatively constant.

Even with slowing growth, the latest Bureau of the Census population estimates for 1999 show that Washington ranks 9<sup>th</sup> in the nation in terms of numerical growth, and 14<sup>th</sup> for percent change from 1998 to 1999. In terms of change over the nine year period, from 1990-99, Washington ranks 7<sup>th</sup> in terms of both numeric and percent change. Top ranking states in terms of numerical growth since 1990 are California, Texas, Florida, Georgia, and Arizona. Nevada, Arizona, Idaho, and Utah have the fastest growth rates.

As in previous years, the fastest-growing Washington counties in terms of percentage changes were Clark, Jefferson and Grant counties, in that order. From 1990 through 2000, Clark County grew by 44.9 percent, Jefferson County by 31.3 percent and Grant by 30.5 percent.

In terms of numerical population change, King County — now over 1.5 million in size — gained an estimated 178,000 persons over the decade. For the same period, Snohomish County added nearly 128,000 persons and Pierce County added 120,000. These three counties accounted for 45 percent of the state's total growth over the 1990s. Clark County, with a gain of almost 107,000, was the only other county in the state to add over 100,000 persons in the last ten years.

The population of cities and towns in Washington has grown by 862,400 since 1990, due mostly to annexation and incorporation. The latest new incorporation — the 13<sup>th</sup> incorporation since January 1990 — is the City of Sammamish, with a population of nearly 30,800. The 2000 population estimates and rankings for cities and counties are all available on the Office of Financial Management web site, under NEWS at <http://www.ofm.wa.gov>.

In decennial census years, state and local government population estimates by the Office of Financial Management have always served as interim population figures until Bureau of the Census counts are available. Year 2000 state population federal census counts will be available in December 2000. Local government counts will be available spring 2001.

###

*For more information, contact Theresa Lowe at the Office of Financial Management, (360-902-0588) or the Population Section, (360-902-0599).*